AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions and listings of claims in the

application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Currently Amended) A method of providing ~~the~~ preferential ~~facility of~~

~~obtaining~~access for particular calls between ~~users by reserving circuit segments for~~

~~some~~preferred users of a communication network ~~in the event that~~wherein said particular calls

are established via circuits between~~at least two~~ switching nodes ~~of said network, in the context of~~

~~a network constituted so that each call requested by a user via a terminal is set up via a circuit for~~

~~connecting said terminal to the terminal of a called user~~, said circuits comprising one circuit

segment or a plurality of circuit segments connected in series, ~~when said call is set up via a~~

~~plurality of switching nodes of said network,~~wherein for call setup each segment ~~being~~is selected

from available circuit segments on a trunk between two switching nodes so that a circuit is set up

enabling the calling user and the called user to communicate, which method includes the

~~following operations~~steps of:

permanently reserving at least one circuit segment on each trunk between

switching nodes needed to set up circuits for ~~each of~~ said particular calls between users

~~for which a preferred user attribute has been granted to at least one particular user of the~~

~~two users concerned~~at least one of whom is a preferred user, and

dynamically allocating circuit segments selected from said reserved segments and

needed to set up a circuit from ~~said terminal of one~~a preferred user ~~who has a preferred~~

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~~user attribute for particular calls~~ in the event of a call set-up request by ~~one of~~ said ~~users~~

~~in respect of a call for which he has been granted a~~ preferred user ~~attribute~~.

2. (Previously Presented) The method claimed in claim 1 wherein a user attribute is assigned to each user and corresponds to a particular category indication in the case of preferred users included in the calling user identifier that is transmitted for setting up a circuit at the time of a call request.

3. (Previously Presented) The method claimed in claim 1 wherein a minimum-cost algorithm used to choose a circuit at the time of a call request gives priority to choosing the shortest circuit set up via one or more reserved circuit segments in series when the request emanates from a user who has a preferred user attribute relating to the call requested and uses an unreserved circuit segment of a trunk if no reserved segments of said trunk are available and said trunk has at least one unreserved segment available at the time.

4. (Original) The method claimed in claim 1 wherein processing capabilities of the network are used for all users in the event of saturation of a trunk concerning a call for which a user has a preferred user attribute.

5. (Currently Amended) A communication network including switching nodes with point-to-point connections provided by trunks enabling users to communicate who have

communication terminals each individually connected to one of said nodes, each call being

obtained by means of a circuit set up between the nodes of users connected by a circuit segment

in each trunk used, which communication network includes hardware and/or software for

implementing a method of providing ~~the~~ preferential ~~facility of obtaining~~access for particular

calls between preferred users ~~by reserving circuit segments for some users~~ of a communication

network ~~in the event that~~wherein said particular calls are established via circuits between~~at least~~

~~two~~ switching nodes ~~of said network, in the context of a network constituted so that each call~~

~~requested by a user via a terminal is set up via a circuit for connecting said terminal to the~~

~~terminal of a called user~~, said circuits comprising one circuit segment or a plurality of circuit

segments connected in series, ~~when said call is set up via a plurality of switching nodes of said~~

~~network,~~wherein for call setup each segment ~~being~~is selected from available circuit segments on

a trunk between two switching nodes so that a circuit is set up enabling the calling user and the

called user to communicate, which network includes:

at least one permanently reserved circuit segment on each trunk between

switching nodes needed to set up circuits for ~~each of~~said particular calls between users

~~for which~~at least one of whom is a preferred user~~attribute has been granted to at least one~~

~~particular user of the two users concerned~~, and

at least one of hardware and software which dynamically allocates circuit

segments selected from said reserved segments and needed to set up a circuit from ~~said~~

~~terminal of one~~a preferred user ~~who has a preferred user attribute for particular calls~~ in

the event of a call set-up request by ~~one of said users in respect of a call for which he has been granted a~~said preferred user ~~attribute~~.

6. (Original) The network claimed in claim 5 wherein a preferred user attribute is assigned to each user and corresponds to a particular category indication in the case of preferred users included in the calling user identifier that is transmitted for setting up a circuit at the time of a call request.

7. (Original) The network claimed in claim 5 wherein a minimum-cost algorithm used to choose a circuit at the time of a call request gives priority to choosing the shortest circuit set up via one or more reserved circuit segments in series when the request emanates from a user who has a preferred user attribute relating to the call requested and uses an unreserved circuit segment of a trunk if no reserved segments of said trunk are available and said trunk has at least one unreserved segment available at the time.

8. (Original) The network claimed in claim 5 wherein processing capabilities of the network are used for all users in the event of saturation of a trunk concerning a call for which a user has a preferred user attribute.

9. (Previously Presented) A method of providing preferred access for particular calls between users of a network, said network including at least two switching nodes and a plurality

of circuit segments connected between said two switching nodes, said method comprising the steps of:

permanently reserving a subset of said circuit segments such that reserved and unreserved segments are provided between said two switching nodes;

according preferred status to a subset of users of said network; and

providing higher priority access to said reserved segments for calls involving a user having preferred status than for calls not involving a user having said preferred status.

10. (Previously Presented) The method claimed in claim 9, wherein said reserved segments are only available to calls involving a user having said preferred status.

11. (Previously Presented) A method of sharing capacity amongst users of a network, said network including at least two switching nodes and a plurality of circuit segments connected between said two switching nodes, said method comprising the steps of:

dividing said plurality of circuit segments into first and second segments;

according preferred status to a subset of users of said network; and

for calls involving a user having said preferred status, providing higher priority access to said first segments than to said second segments.

12. (Previously Presented) A communications network including at least two switching

nodes and a plurality of circuit segments connected between said two switching nodes, wherein

said plurality of circuit segments include first and second segments with a call

involving a user having preferred status having higher priority access to said first

segments than to said second segments; and

said network includes at least one of hardware and software which dynamically

allocates said first segments amongst calls involving users having said preferred status.

13. (Previously Presented) The network claimed in claim 12, wherein said first segments

are only available to calls involving a user having said preferred status.